

"I believe Doris would wait until I could get started at something."

"Do you think a girl who has lived ten years in New York would stay one month in a ranchman's shack without the ordinary comforts of civilization? Not on your life! Now I like Doris and I had looked forward to your coming into the firm, marrying and settling down like a decent citizen."

Jason Paine had played his trump card and he noted its effect in the thoughtful face of his son. Nothing more was said. But about a week after the young man announced his determination to go west.

"Dad," he said, "there couldn't be but one thing on earth that could keep me here—that's you. It cuts me to the heart to disappoint you. But this would either kill me or drive me mad. Some day I might go through the window or burn up the store."

"How about Doris?"

"She has said she would wait."

"Umph! Perhaps she will."

Paine, senior, went on to say that not a penny could his son expect from him to invest in his "fool venture," but if he ever wanted to come home he would send him his railroad fare and a hearty welcome awaited him. Mrs. Paine said very little. She did not oppose the boy and a mother's sympathy shone in her eyes. As for Doris, she bade him God-speed.

"You must do the thing that calls you," she said. "It is not written that in the breaking of your heart you shall earn your bread."

"Dear, brave little girl," he said. "I will make good. Pray that it may not be so very long before I can come after you."

So Donald went. They heard from him often from various points of the compass. He did not seem to stay long in one place, and the ranch seemed as yet a remote possibility.

"It's just his roving nature," said his father. "He'll never stay long enough in one place to build a shack or fence in a ranch."

When nearly two years had gone by and Donald seemed to be settled nowhere yet, the heart of Doris grew heavy within her. Hewitt, a clever young lawyer, began to pay her assiduous attentions. Jason Paine became aware of this and felt it his duty to say to her: "Doris, child, I had hoped that some day you might in reality be my daughter, but don't think that I shall blame you—no—and mother couldn't — if you can't waste your life waiting. I'm afraid he wasn't meant to—to marry."

"I am willing to wait. I haven't lost faith," she said. But when he saw her continually in the company of Hewitt he could not but doubt her words. Perhaps she was unwittingly being made to forget the wanderer.

Then came a letter saying at last he had started his ranch, and for a year and over there was the same address. Still he did not speak to Doris of coming for her. She began to wonder a bit. Three years is a long time to wait and young Hewitt did not give up his suit.

One day Donald Paine walked in on the astonished girl. He was bronzed and brawny, well dressed and cheerful. He had his ranch and his shack, and "would she go back with him?" Decidedly she would. He took her home with him to dinner. There was going to be a family council and they wanted her in it.

After dinner they assembled in the cozy library.

"Now," said Paine, senior, "before we consent, or Doris' mother consents, we must know something definite about your prospects. He looked uncompromisingly at his son and waited for him to begin.

"When you wondered at my frequent change of address," said the young man, "I was with a surveying expedition and was salting down all my wages and looking for land. At last I found a ranch, all fenced, and with some buildings that a man wanted to sell. The money I took with me and the little I had added to